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ABSTRACT

An Arkansas project implemented 10 vocational student organization (VSO) models developed during a planning grant for across-the-board activities. A State Coordinating Committee consisting of seven individuals who represented all the VSOs in Arkansas was formed. Members' cooperation was a key to project success. Three 1-week Governor's Institutes provided leadership training for approximately 300 students. A packet of materials on parliamentary procedures was developed and disseminated to each Arkansas school in which a vocational program existed. A Legislative Day for VSOs was provided once each year. Discussions were held and recommendations were solicited from the State Coordinating Committee as to the best approach to offering advisor training. A marketing program was considered but determined not to be feasible. A consultant was hired to plan and present leadership conferences for all state officers of the VSOs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. A vocational education workshop for VSO advisors was conducted in conjunction with the summer Arkansas Vocational Association Conference. A statewide VSO newsletter was developed and disseminated. The proposal for a model to develop brochures to develop awareness of VSOs was not carried out. Evaluations of each model indicated students were extremely receptive to the concept of across-the-board activities and each individual activity. (YLB)

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FINAL REPORT

Implementing Across-the-Board Vocational Student Organization Models

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VOCATIONAL DIVISION
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Conducted by

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In Cooperation with
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Arkansas Department of Education
Little Rock, Arkansas 72701

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational Student Organizations (VSO's) have been associated with individual vocational instructional programs for many years. In fact, many people refer to individual vocational instructional programs primarily by the student organization name (i.e., DECA for marketing education or FFA for agricultural education). VSO's that are available on a nationwide basis (such as FFA, FHA, FBLA, VICA, or DECA) have a rich tradition of citizenship and leadership development within their own discipline, and more recently have been incorporated into the vocational education philosophy as an integral part of each instructional program.

The benefits of participation in a VSO are well documented. Students not only experience personal growth, but they typically have the opportunity for a closer, realistic interaction with their community's business and industry.

Individually, each VSO provides its members with a wealth of knowledge and enriching experiences. The purpose of this project was to glean knowledge and experiences from each VSO with an "across-the-board" approach to enhancing the personal benefits derived from participation in every vocational student organizations. At the same time, it was anticipated that by having members from different VSO's participate in across-the-board activities together, more attention might be brought to the value of VSO's, thus increasing membership as well as improving the public image of vocational education.

Prior to this project, a planning grant was undertaken which identified ten across-the-board activities for members and advisors of VSO's in Arkansas. This project consisted of the implementation of these models.

OBJECTIVES

The overall purpose of the project was to implement ten VSO models developed during a planning grant for across-the-board activities. The specific objectives were:

(1) to form an ongoing, active State Coordinating Committee consisting of seven individuals who represent all of the VSO's in Arkansas. This committee assisted the project co-directors in implementing the selected across-the-board activities.

(2) to provide an annual Governor's Institute for VSO leaders.

(3) to develop and disseminate parliamentary procedure materials to VSO's throughout the state.

(4) to provide a Legislative Day for VSO's each year the legislature meets.

(5) to implement college courses on the preservice and inservice levels for VSO advisors as a part of the regular vocational teacher education program.

(6) to contract with a marketing firm a professional services contract or utilize the services of the Communications Section of the Division of

Vocational and Technical Education to assist the VSO's in Arkansas in meeting their optimum goals and objectives.

(7) to conduct a statewide across-the-board leadership conference each year for the officers and advisors of VSO's in Arkansas.

(8) to conduct a Vocational Education workshop for VSO advisors in conjunction with the summer Arkansas Vocational Association Conference.

(9) to develop and disseminate a VSO newsletter to VSO members and advisors throughout Arkansas.

(10) to develop and disseminate VSO brochures to promote VSO's in Arkansas

PROCEDURES

The objectives of this project were accomplished by implementing each of the individual models. The models included in this project were selected by the task force of the planning grant which was conducted during August, 1985, through January, 1986.

Responsibility for accomplishing the objectives of the project was divided between the project staff and the state coordinating committee. The project staff included two co-directors and one research associate. One of the co-directors was located in Fayetteville on the University of Arkansas campus, while the other co-director was located in Little Rock. Their main responsibility was to provide

leadership for the project in terms of the activities as well as budgetary matters. The research associate was responsible for coordinating the details of the activities. Everyone on the project staff was also closely involved with the State Coordinating Committee to ensure that the project activities reflected the wishes of the Committee as much as possible.

The State Coordinating Committee was composed of one representative from each of the VSO's in Arkansas, usually this was the State Advisor for the organization. The members of the Committee elected a Chairman and a Secretary.

Periodic meetings of the Committee and project staff were held. Dates and locations were set for the activities, and Committee members were given the opportunity to provide the project staff with input as to the direction of the project.

Because the scope of each of the models varied, the procedure used in each of the models will be briefly described below.

State Coordinating Committee

The unique nature of this project (i.e., planning activities for the VSO's to do together) necessitated that the State Advisors for the organizations be informed of the activities and also that they endorse the project. Close communication between the project staff and the Coordinating Committee was an essential element in the success of this project.

Governor's Institute for Vocational Student Organizations

During the time period of this project, three one-week Governor's Institutes were held. The workshop was designed for high school students who had demonstrated leadership potential. The Institute was held on the University of Arkansas campus. The Institute was planned and presented by consultants who had previous experience with leadership development workshops such as this. The activities included a great deal of self awareness exercises, as well as group activities in which the students learned the value of teamwork and how to get along with others. Each of the three Institutes provided training for approximately 100 students. Ten teachers were also present at the Institute, and served as counselors and chaperons for the entire week.

Parliamentary Procedures Materials

A packet of materials was developed and disseminated to the media center of each school in the state in which a vocational program exists. A contract was issued for the development of a video tape which illustrated proper parliamentary procedures at a typical VSO meeting. The packet also included a basic book on parliamentary procedures and a quick reference card for motions.

Legislative Day

Twice during the time period of this project the State President of each VSO and his or her adviser were invited to come to the State Capitol during National Vocational Education week in February. The VSO Presidents were allowed to

go onto the floor of the House and the Senate while they were in session. Selected students were given the opportunity to make a brief speech to the legislators. A luncheon was also provided. This activity was a learning experience for the students as well as an excellent opportunity for the legislators to see first-hand the benefits of vocational education and the VSO's. Each one of the Legislative Days was attended by approximately 14 students, their local and state advisors, as well as several members of the State Department of Education staff.

VSO College Courses

Discussions were held and recommendations solicited from the State Coordinating Committee and others as to the best approach to offering more training at both the undergraduate and graduate level for VSO advisors. It was recommended that whatever courses were possible to offer at the college level would certainly be a positive step toward more effective VSO's.

Marketing Program

The Communications staff at the Division of Vocational-Technical Education were contacted about the possibility of producing radio and television spots to promote VSO's. A small group of students from the various organizations would meet in Little Rock to do the taping. The Communications staff was to be responsible for purchasing the air time, which was limited to the amount set aside in the budget for this item. After investigating the possibilities of

actually producing and running these spots, it was determined that there would be enumerable difficulties in deciding which students would participate, and also the timing of the taping was a problem. It was felt that the optimum time for airing these spots would be late August and early September when school was starting. This seemed like the ideal time to use this media coverage as recruiting tools. However, to run these at that time, the taping needed to be done during the summer. It was determined that this model was really not feasible at the time.

Statewide Leadership Conference

A consultant was hired to plan and present a workshop for all state officers of the VSO's in Arkansas. Separate workshops were held for secondary and postsecondary officers. The format for the workshop was three days in the summer for secondary officers and two days in the fall for the postsecondary officers. The activities included self awareness, information on leadership styles, basic responsibilities of state officers, and group activities for improving human relations skills.

Vocational Education Workshop

Arrangements were made for a motivational speaker to be included in the summer Arkansas Vocational Education Conference. This conference is attended by nearly all of the vocational teachers in the state.

VSO Newsletter

Articles for a statewide VSO newsletter were solicited from each organization's State Reporter. The articles were submitted to the project staff for approval. The Communications staff at the Division of Vocational-Technical Education were contacted for suggestions as to format, content, and layout. The student's articles consisted of reports on state conferences and plans for upcoming activities for the organization. The articles were submitted to the Media Implementation Center at Metropolitan Vocational School in Little Rock where they did the final layout and printing of the newsletter. Twenty copies of the newsletter were then mailed to each vocational teacher in the state.

VSO Brochures

The proposal for this project included a model to develop two kinds of brochures to increase awareness of vocational student organizations. One brochure would be a summary of each organization, and the other would be concerned with just one organization (a brochure would be developed for each organization). However, at the time this was to be developed during the project, the Division of Vocational-Technical Education was developing public relations materials similar to what had been planned. Therefore, rather than duplicate this material it was decided to focus on other aspects of the project.

FINDINGS

There were many accomplishments which resulted from the activities of this project. Each of the models could stand on its own merit, and each of them will be addressed here in terms of the accomplishments, however collectively they represent a positive step forward in the growth and continued improvement in vocational education at all levels, and specifically where the vocational student organizations are concerned.

The State Coordinating Committee was a key to the success of this project. The cooperation and genuine interest on the part of the State staff to participate on this committee was very gratifying. They truly believe in the value of VSO's, and each one of the members contributed a great deal of time away from their already busy schedule to assist the project staff.

Another major accomplishment of this model was satisfaction on the part of the committee members in terms of a 'united' effort. It seems that they were also pleased at the level of cooperation that was generated among themselves.

The Governor's Institute for Vocational Student Organizations was a tremendous success. It was probably the most successful model of the entire project, both in terms of numbers of students reached as well as the amount of satisfaction each student experienced. Approximately 300 students received leadership training over the course of

this project, and not one of them expressed dissatisfaction with this workshop. Every single one of the participants said it was the best thing they had ever experienced. That in itself is a major accomplishment. The results of this one model will be reaped for years to come in each one of those individual's lives.

The Parliamentary Procedures material which was developed was also quite successful. The material was useful to the organizations, and will remain useful for several years to come.

Legislative Day was a tremendous success. The only real drawback to this model is that it is difficult to arrange schedules with the legislature, and it is very difficult to make arrangements for a group to enter the chamber while it is in session. However, both times that this was accomplished, the legislators were extremely impressed with the students, and were able to see the benefits of the funding that has been provided to vocational education. This is probably one of the best ways to ensure continued support for vocational education--to show off our students.

The VSO college courses met with positive results as well. Of course, each college must make their own decisions about what courses to offer, but the University of Arkansas has added an undergraduate course in vocational student organizations to their requirements for vocational teacher education programs.

The marketing program was one of the models which was somewhat difficult to "get off the ground." Due to the expense involved, plus the fact that the Division of Vocational-Technical Education has done a great deal on its own to market vocational education, resulted in some "rethinking" about the practicality of this type of model in an across-the-board project such as this one.

The Statewide Leadership Conference model was the one that went through the most modifications during the project. Several formats were tried, and there were accomplishments that were made. The biggest problem with this model was the fact that several of the VSO's in Arkansas do a tremendous job of providing leadership training for their state officers already. Also, the fact that this was attempted during the summer months for the secondary students made it difficult because this time is already very busy for the students with national conferences and other activities which they must attend. This model has merit, but it really needs more time and organization to be fully developed.

The model for the vocational education workshop for advisors met with limited success. The state vocational conference in the summer is a difficult medium in which to attempt such an undertaking. The scope of this project was really not one in which this was easily accomplished. A speaker was provided at one of the conferences, however it seems that in the future any efforts in this area should be undertaken from the state department staff.

The brochures for the student organizations was another area in which the Division was also addressing in their efforts to publicize vocational education. An article which provided information about VSO's was included in a newspaper tabloid that was distributed in the Little Rock area

EVALUATION

Each of the models included its own evaluation process. The models in which students participated included written evaluation instruments which asked them to tell what they liked best and least about the activities. As indicated above, the students were extremely receptive to the concept of across-the-board activities as well as each of the activities in which they participated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this project was a success. Some of the models were more successful than others, but the intent of the project was to experiment with different models to determine first of all if the concept of across-the-board activities was feasible, and secondly, which of the models would be the most appropriate.

The concensus from all participants and staff members s was that the most successful models should definitely be continued. The accomplishments of this project should be a definite consideration when funding is available to continue such a project n the future.